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Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives
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Consideration of further actions and initiatives to implement the commitments made at the Summit

Further initiatives for the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to decision 2 of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives at its organizational session, in May 1998, the Committee has two tasks: review of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development; and consideration of further initiatives. The present report discusses the second of these tasks. It is based on the report of the Secretary-General on further initiatives for the implementation of the outcome of the Summit (E/CN.5/1999/3), prepared for the consideration of the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-seventh session, in February 1999, and has been revised in the light of discussions that took place during the Commission. A separate report on a preliminary assessment of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit (A/AC.253/7) will also be before the Committee.

The report consists of three main sections. The introduction describes the criteria for selection of issues for consideration at the special session. Sections I–X describe possible issues under each of the 10 commitments adopted at Copenhagen. The report's conclusion

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emphasizes that these proposals are preliminary, and that one of the goals of the first session of the Committee will be to identify priorities and to mandate the elaboration of a limited number of specific initiatives.

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Introduction

1. The holding of the World Summit for Social Development, and the attendance of 117 heads of State or Government and the representation of 69 other States, were a powerful global expression of commitment to social goals. These were stated in terms of the three central goals of poverty eradication, full employment and social integration and developed in the preparatory process into the 10 commitments agreed at the Summit.[1]

2. Since the Summit, Governments and international organizations have responded to the 10 commitments and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development[2] agreed at Copenhagen in many strategic and concrete ways. There has been marked improvement in the attention being given to social issues by many countries and in most international organizations, initiatives have been taken, and policies have evolved in ways that are contributing to movement towards the Summit goals.

3. There are wide national differences in the extent of, and capacity for, implementation. The period since the Summit has been relatively brief and, recently, external circumstances for many countries have deteriorated. Therefore, the process of moving towards achievement of the Summit goals can, in the best of circumstances, have only begun. Where strategies and policies have been changed, it is too early for substantial, measurable results to have been achieved. A survey of available evidence is summarized in the reports of the Secretary-General on preliminary assessment of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development (E/CN.5/1999/4 and A/AC.253/7). It suggests that, globally, the absolute number of people living in poverty is still increasing; that the number of people officially recorded as unemployed remains high; that the number of underemployed people is enormous and growing; and that social disintegration is intensifying in some countries.

4. Therefore, the imperatives for focusing attention on these issues remain at least as strong as, if not stronger than, at the time of the Summit. To seriously attempt this requires renewed commitment not only to the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development[3] and Programme of Action but also to searching for additional and more effective ways of implementing them.

5. The special session of the General Assembly to be held in Geneva from 26 to 30 June 2000 and its preparatory process offer a welcome opportunity for sharing and comparing experiences, learning from the policies and programmes of other countries, strengthening commitment, encouraging more effective action and identifying further concrete means of addressing the 10 commitments. The fact that the special session is being held in the millennial year will give an additional incentive to treating these central social issues with a long-term perspective, and to the preparation of strategies that are appropriate for the early part of the next century.

6. The objectives of the special session identified by the General Assembly include both evaluating the effectiveness of implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the Summit and deciding on further initiatives for achieving these commitments. At its organizational session in May 1998, the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development agreed that the framework for discussion at the special session would be the 10 commitments made at Copenhagen. Initiatives are to be sought in relation to each of them. The thirty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development (9–19 February 1999) offered the first formal opportunity for discussion of the issues that should be addressed by the special session; and the present report updates the report of the Secretary-General prepared for that session on further initiatives for the implementation of the outcome of the Summit (E/CN.5/1999/3) on the basis of discussion held there, and provides a review of issues that could be addressed at the special session.

7. The generation of additional concrete and innovative means of strengthening and extending the implementation of the Summit commitments and plans is a demanding task. The first step is to decide on the issues that need the most urgent attention. Accordingly, the present report concentrates on providing a basis for identification of suitable issues for inclusion in the agenda of the special session. A few comments are also made about possible initiatives relating to them.

8. The criteria for selection of issues to be included in the agenda for the special session include:

- The importance of the issue in respect of addressing one or more of the commitments;
- Whether the issue was included in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development or the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development;
- Whether possible means for addressing the issue are available;

- The importance of a proposal related to an issue as a contribution to, or a means of coping with a constraint on achieving one of the commitments;
- The concreteness of such a proposal. At its organizational session, the Committee agreed that the special session would simply reaffirm the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and so would avoid renegotiating the text. The special session will therefore have the opportunity to concentrate entirely on new initiatives for implementation;
- The relevance of a proposal to the commitments. This is a broad limitation, however, because the commitments include creating an enabling environment for social development, and this covers many economic, political and institutional issues as well as the directly social, which is in any case a broad category itself;
- The feasibility of a proposal. Feasibility is a complex issue to assess, because it has several dimensions including the political, institutional, administrative and financial, and these qualities vary enormously among countries.

9. Several of the contextual comments made at the Commission for Social Development, during its thirty-seventh session, warrant repetition. The importance of aiming for action-oriented and focused outcomes was emphasized. One of the principal features of the Summit — the recognition of the close interdependence of social and economic dimensions of societies, illustrated through the interrelatedness of the 10 commitments — should be maintained at the special session. This leads to a comprehensive, holistic approach, integrating social and economic objectives and policies at national, regional and international levels. The centrality of the goal of increasing human security through people-centred development was reaffirmed: the basis of social development lies in the equitable empowerment of individuals, communities and countries. The recommendations which follow, for consideration at the special session, refer to each of the 10 commitments and have been prepared with those comments in mind.

I. An enabling environment for social development

10. Harmonious and equitable social and economic development requires both formal democratic systems and participatory institutions and mechanisms. Necessary conditions include both free and fair elections and opportunities for the various groups to express their opinions, and to be heard and for equitable compromises to be reached. Free and fair elections — as the experience of many new democracies has shown — are only one element of a democratic society, albeit a crucial one. Some other critical elements include well-functioning legislative and judicial systems, respect for political, economic and social rights, an independent media, use of legal norms, and predictable rules for decision-making and conflict resolution. These elements are prerequisites of sustaining an open society and interrelated participatory democracy.

11. Experience with various participatory mechanisms could well be discussed during the preparatory process, with a view to recommending additional possibilities. Subsidiarity is a widely accepted principle involving dealing with issues at the most appropriate level, so it is required that attention be directed not only to national government but also to local government and to international governance. The Commission for Social Development, at its thirty-sixth session, in 1998, considered a mechanism which some Governments have found of value: the creation of advisory social and economic councils which include representatives of the major sectors of society, including businesses, unions, religious organizations and other actors of civil society, along with various segments of government.

12. Since the Summit, economic and social interdependence has continued to increase; thus, one issue that would naturally be in the agenda for the special session is the implications of globalization for national social policy. The issue has both analytical and prescriptive dimensions, and since there has been much discussion of the former, at the special session the concentration should naturally be on national and international policy responses.

13. Awareness, concern and even preoccupation with globalization have intensified considerably since the Summit was held. One of the important achievements of the Summit was the recognition that countries could not achieve social goals — let alone cope with the consequences of growing international integration — by themselves. With growing global integration, increasing international cooperation has become an imperative for social and economic development. At the same time, there is growing sentiment among many countries that aspects of globalization can in fact marginalize rather than integrate economies, and that sustainable growth is not automatic. Recent cases of international capital flight from developing countries, which have created tremendous strains and increased poverty, have been attributed in part to shortcomings in domestic policies and institutions, for example, but they can also be seen as symptomatic of an

international financial system which fails to differentiate satisfactorily the performance of individual developing countries. Several responses are required.

14. First and most important is the recognition that, despite globalization, every Government still has considerable power. The discussion of national policy at the Summit was, and such discussion at the special session has to be, premised on this fact.

15. Second, countries can act together to more effectively reduce threats of international volatility, instability, inefficiency and inequity. More of the standards and infrastructure of international exchange have to be established or provided by countries acting together. The norms and structures of such areas as trade and finance, communication and travel and some aspects of health services, social policy and crime prevention must be universal if they are to be effective. Global norms and standards have to be extended and strengthened and the range of global public goods increased. The commitments and parts of the Programme of Action of the Summit are examples of international standard setting. Such cooperative international activity must be a major focus of the special session.

16. Third, much more rigorous evaluation about the extent of liberalization and about its sequencing, speed and planning is required. Such evaluation must include the social dimension. Following the Asian financial crisis, it is now clearer than ever that, in the context of international financial liberalization, there have been high costs for some countries from weaknesses in both domestic policy and the international institutional and policy structure. For while major elements in the crisis have had to do with domestic structures, institutions and policies, a major impediment to social development is international institutional and policy weakness.

17. A priority for the Special session could therefore be to make two clear statements on:

(a) Principles of national socio-economic policy for responses to financial crises, for use by Governments and international institutions when they must cope with the consequences of international financial instability;

(b) Socio-economic aspects of reform of international financial structures and policies, which could provide a foundation for technical discussions on the subject in other, appropriate forums.

18. Such issues raise questions for all countries about the interplay between state and market in the provision of socio-economic well-being. Such reflection can range from practical issues such as the most effective means for offsetting various forms of market failure in particular circumstances to conceptual questions about the compatibility of liberalized markets with equitable social development.

19. Since the Summit, much more attention has been given by corporations and by Governments — most recently at the Commission for Social Development — to the social responsibilities of business. There has been considerable activity in terms of extending the articulation of goals, principles and policies. The special session might like to systematically review this and to attempt some basic, globally applicable guidelines. The Second Enterprise Forum to be convened by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in November 1999 will provide recommendations on corporate citizenship and social initiatives, and therefore should provide an impetus to the special session's work in this field. The Forum will involve entrepreneurs working in both industrialized and developing countries, and will embrace business activities of different scales of operation.

20. Concern about the inequities and inefficiencies caused by corruption has increased since the Summit. There is growing recognition of the injustices, distortions and economic losses caused by corruption. There is recognition, too, of the complexity of corruption and the variety of the forms that it can take, at both national and international levels, as well as on the demand and supply side. Progress has been made in several intergovernmental contexts in establishing a framework to discourage corruption and in setting up disincentives. More work needs to be done on clarifying the meaning of corruption and what constitutes corrupt practices, and to obtain greater international convergence of views in these areas. Several delegations mentioned the possibility of promoting standards and means for discouraging corruption during the special session.

21. International commitment to principles underlying many of the Summit commitments was previously expressed in various covenants, conventions and declarations concerned with human rights, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,[4] the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Declaration on the Right to Development.[5] The Summit called for encouraging ratification of existing international human rights conventions that have not been ratified, and implementing the provisions of conventions and covenants that have been ratified. The special session may wish to review progress in this regard, and reiterate the call to Governments to ratify and implement appropriate international agreements concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Topics for further initiatives

22. The Preparatory Committee may wish to consider the following topics for further initiatives:

(a) Experience with various types of participatory mechanisms, such as advisory social and economic councils;

(b) The implications for social policy of recent trends in globalization, and suggestions for national and international policy responses;

(c) The desirability of extending or strengthening global norms and standards for social policy;

(d) Preparation of principles of socio-economic policy for responding to financial crises;

(e) Preparation of guidelines on the social responsibilities of business;

(f) Standards and means for discouraging corruption;

(g) Review progress and reiterate the call to Governments to ratify and implement appropriate international agreements concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms.

II. Poverty eradication

23. The reports of the Secretary-General on the preliminary assessment of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit (E/CN.5/1999/4 and A/AC.253/7) indicate the global extent and depth of poverty. The enormity of the number of people in poverty is clear: about a quarter of humankind are severely deprived and more than another quarter are at the borderline. Poverty eradication is the most important moral issue facing this age.

24. Much work has already been undertaken throughout the United Nations system on the subject of poverty eradication. This was briefly summarized in two of the reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on poverty eradication (A/52/573 and A/53/329). Shortly after the Summit, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) set up four task forces to prepare coordinated action on major commitments of all the global conferences. The organizational conclusion of this process within the United Nations system was a statement of commitment for action to eradicate poverty issued in June 1998 by the executive heads of all United Nations agencies. The statement reaffirmed that poverty eradication is a key international commitment and a central objective of the United Nations system.

25. The executive heads of organizations in the United Nations system outlined the elements of a shared strategy and committed themselves to the concerted effort by all agencies towards poverty eradication and also to playing a supportive and catalytic role in mobilizing the energies and resources of all development actors — Governments, the private sector, civil society, donors and above all the poor themselves — in the campaign against poverty.

26. National poverty reduction strategies are the most important means of moving towards global poverty eradication. The special session provides an opportunity for all countries and international agencies to review current conditions and to exchange experience on strategies and best practices for poverty eradication. Discussion could reflect both successful policies and constraints. While each country will develop its own strategy appropriate to national circumstances, the special session could confirm that important goals within such strategies would include creation of income-generating opportunities, assurance of income support, provision of basic services and guarantees of minimum living standards for all people.

27. Further consideration might be given by the special session to the value of adopting international targets for poverty eradication based on national strategies and experience. While the heads of State and Government who met at Copenhagen made a strong commitment to the goal of eradicating poverty and recommended that countries set their own time-bound goals for eradicating absolute poverty, the Summit did not set a global, time-bound goal. Since the Summit, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has set itself the goal of "halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015". The special session may wish to adopt this same target, and establish strategies to achieve it.

28. The Copenhagen Programme of Action called upon Governments to implement the commitments that had been made to meet the basic needs of all, with assistance from the international community. Many of those commitments called for specific targets to be attained by the year 2000. Since the special session will be held at the mid-point of the year 2000, it would provide an opportune occasion for a review of the commitments and the extent to which they have been reached. It would also provide an opportunity for the international community to revise and update the targets, as needed, and to give renewed political commitment to their attainment. A report prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs entitled "Charting the progress of populations", dated 1 December 1998, provides an excellent basis for this review. The targets

reiterated in the Copenhagen Programme of Action to be achieved by the year 2000 are:

- Providing universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school-age children;
- Attaining life expectancy of not less than 60 years in any country;
- Reducing mortality rates of infants and children under five years of age by one third of the 1990 level, or 50 to 70 per 1,000 live births, whichever is less;
- Reducing maternal mortality by one half of the 1990 level;
- Reducing severe and moderate malnutrition among children under five years of age by half of the 1990 level;
- Promoting attainment by all peoples of the world of a level of health that will permit them to lead a socially and economically productive life, and to this end, ensuring primary health care for all;
- Reducing malaria mortality and morbidity by at least 20 per cent compared to 1995 levels in at least 75 per cent of affected countries;
- Eradicating, eliminating or controlling major diseases constituting global health problems, in accordance with paragraph 6.12 of Agenda 21;
- Improving the availability of affordable and adequate shelter for all, in accordance with the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000.

29. In addition, the Copenhagen Programme of Action called upon Governments to implement other, longer-term commitments to meet the basic needs of all (a review of progress achieved in the attainment of these commitments could prove useful, and the special session may wish to undertake such a review as a means of providing added impetus to their achievement):

- Closing the gender gap in primary and secondary school education by the year 2005;
- Attaining universal primary education in all countries before the year 2015;
- Reducing the adult illiteracy rate — the appropriate age group to be determined in each country — to at least half its 1990 level, with an emphasis on female literacy; achieving universal access to quality education, with particular priority being given to primary and technical education and job training, combating illiteracy, and eliminating gender disparities in access to, retention in and support for education;
- By the year 2015, achieving an infant mortality rate below 35 per 1,000 live births and an under-five mortality rate below 45 per 1,000;
- By the year 2015, a further reduction in maternal mortality rates by one half;
- Making accessible through the primary health-care system reproductive health to all individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and taking into account the reservations and declarations made at that Conference, especially those concerning the need for parental guidance and parental responsibility;
- Achieving food security by ensuring a safe and nutritionally adequate food supply, at both the national and international levels, a reasonable degree of stability in the supply of food, as well as physical, social and economic access to enough food for all, while reaffirming that food should not be used as a tool for political pressure;
- Providing, on a sustainable basis, access to safe drinking water in sufficient quantities, and proper sanitation for all.

30. An important effort in the eradication of poverty involves supported self-help. Many people living in poverty may be able to raise their standards of living through their own efforts, especially if those efforts receive assistance. Examples include maximizing opportunities for establishment and expansion of small business by increasing the availability of credit, including microcredit, minimizing interest rates, improving infrastructure and the equity of access to productive inputs such as land and sites for enterprise, and increasing the accessibility of information and advisory services. While there are many necessary conditions for rapid poverty reduction, many of which are discussed below, one that is readily amenable to influence and given too little attention is credit, both at the microlevel and for small business. One issue for discussion is additional means of encouraging microcredit schemes.

31. While the most effective approach to poverty reduction is commonly through attempting to enable the poor to help themselves, another necessary expression of commitment to poverty reduction strategy is redistribution. The extent of global poverty suggests that policies relating to

redistribution have a place in the agenda of the special session.

32. The scope for introducing, expanding, and strengthening or reforming social protection systems is a major topic of debate in many countries at present, including those most severely affected by the financial crisis. Discussion of standards for social protection and of strategies for the introduction and management of social protection would be appropriate. A neglected subject that could well be addressed in this area is ways of improving the quality of management of national social protection systems.

33. In many countries, the community-based organizations have been instrumental in strengthening the reciprocity networks and creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual support. This social capital is now recognized to be a crucial asset of society, the value of which is particularly clear when there are economic shocks and adverse economic conditions. Such organizations are active in providing primary health care, clean drinking water, sanitation, formal and informal training, services to people living in poverty, microcredit, and assistance to raise agricultural productivity and develop small businesses. Promoting community participation proves to be as important as fostering individual choice in increasing the economic productivity of the population, particularly in poor urban communities. Community-based organizations are also particularly important in rural development. The special session may wish to consider what policies can be recommended to make community participation in social development more effective.

34. For countries with economies in transition, the process of movement towards a market structure has turned out to be much more difficult and painful than was originally anticipated. The patterns of transition vary substantially and some countries fared better than others in arresting the decline of output and in protecting the welfare of citizens. In most countries with economies in transition, there has been a substantial rise in poverty, including child poverty. Also, the unemployed and the "working poor" are among those who are hit hardest. In many of these countries, substantial groups of people affected by persistent poverty and multiple deprivations have emerged. The rise in poverty and inequality is undermining social development, particularly in many countries of the former USSR, and threatening to reverse earlier social achievements and calling into question support of the population for the economic reforms. Taking into account the growing spread of poverty and its highly negative social and political dimensions, the special session may wish to consider what kind of national, regional and international measures can be recommended in order to reverse the negative trends.

35. The Copenhagen Programme of Action called for development of comprehensive national strategies for improving reproductive health care and child health-care services and ensuring that people living in poverty have full access to those services, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The special session may wish to consider national experience in the development of such strategies, following any initiatives set forth by the Committee.

Topics for further initiatives

36. The Committee may wish to consider the following topics for further initiatives:

(a) Further guidance on important aspects to be incorporated into national strategies for poverty eradication;

(b) Adoption of a global target for poverty eradication of halving the number of people living in absolute poverty by the year 2015;

(c) Review of the attainment of commitments to meet the basic needs of all by the year 2000 contained in the Copenhagen Programme of Action;

(d) Review of ongoing activities to meet longer-term commitments to meet the basic needs of all contained in the Copenhagen Programme of Action;

(e) Experience with programmes to extend credit, and means for encouraging microcredit schemes;

(f) Discussion of policies of redistribution;

(g) The establishment, strengthening and improvement in management of national social protection systems;

(h) Policies to make community participation in social development activities more effective;

(i) National, regional and international measures to counteract the spread of poverty in countries with economies in transition.

III. Employment

37. Growth of employment has become the highest priority for national and international economic and social policy. It will contribute more than any other economic or social achievement to reducing poverty, to increasing personal and national economic security, to reducing waste, to increasing efficiency, to improving equity and to strengthening social integration. The Commission for Social Development, at its thirty-fifth session, in February 1997, concluded that it is

imperative for all countries and the international community to reinstate the attainment of full, productive, and appropriately and adequately remunerated and freely chosen employment as a central objective of economic and social policies.[6]

38. Yet, in most countries unemployment and underemployment are high. Growth of employment — of income-generating opportunities for work — could therefore well become the principal focus of the special session. Employment-centred economic and social policy not only increases opportunities for work but also encourages initiative, reduces poverty and can contribute to reducing welfare dependency. The agreed conclusions on productive employment and sustainable livelihoods, adopted by the Commission at its thirty-fifth session, in its resolution 35/2, suggest some ways forward.

39. The Commission recognized that setting time-bound goals and targets for expanding employment and reducing unemployment would give a strong signal of the increased priority to be accorded to the objective of full employment.[7] In the past many countries have set targets for the intermediate goals of reduction of inflation or for the rate of economic growth but few set targets for the centrally important goal of employment growth and linked them with strategies for their achievement.

40. Adoption of a central goal for growth of employment involves refocusing and modifying macroeconomic policies. One of the issues that was central to the whole Summit was the importance of integrating economic and social policy more effectively. One of the principal areas where this is vital is in relation to macroeconomic policy. More contemporary national and international discussion of how to achieve a balanced approach to macroeconomic policy could be very valuable, focusing on how to simultaneously address economic and social goals, such as full employment, low inflation and development in the fullest sense, including both efficient economic growth and an effective strategy for increasing equity. The recent changes of emphasis by major industrialized countries and by the leaders of the European Union suggest the possibility of a new direction. Aspects of the issue relate to the scope for further international cooperation.

41. A more sophisticated balance of economic goals is possible, including aiming for simultaneous reduction of unemployment and low inflation. One of the benefits of globalization is that intensifying international competition removes or reduces the capacity of enterprises to administer prices and so reduces inflationary pressure. Changes in technology, industrial structure, the relative power of trade unions and other factors are altering the pattern of demand for labour and reducing pressure for wage increases. In this situation, where national inflation rates are commonly lower than at any time for decades and in which inflationary pressure is much reduced, there is more scope for employment-enhancing macroeconomic policies. Such policies must aim to increase the rate of economic growth, especially in ways that will maximize the growth of employment.

42. For many developing countries, the principal issue is the thrust of development strategy: how to strengthen employment-generating, productivity-increasing human development. For most developing countries, rural development must be the main element in the national employment strategy. Crucial requirements are well known and include improving the access to and quality of primary, secondary, technical and vocational education; improving marketing arrangements for primary commodities; land reform; mobilization of domestic saving for infrastructure including small scale, local public works and for private investment; and attracting foreign direct investment under conditions that ensure benefits to the receiving countries.

43. One of the issues discussed at the Commission for Social Development was the importance of taking adequate account of the impact of technological developments on society in general, and their value in increasing levels of employment in particular. Continuous introduction of new technologies has proved essential for improving the efficiency of firms and for maintaining their competitiveness. The actual effect of new technologies on levels of employment varies in different situations. Some technological innovation displaces workers; in other cases, new technologies, combined with sufficient financing, can promote the development of entire new industries and provide new opportunities for employment. Technology can also improve the quality of employment, by replacing repetitive, unpleasant work, and it can help to cut waste and environmental pollution. In order to take full advantage of technological innovations, workers need to be prepared. Effective introduction of new technologies requires high-quality education and training systems which enable young people to become proficient in their use, and it also requires greater attention to provision of lifelong learning, so that workers can adapt to new opportunities provided by constantly evolving technologies.

44. A major concern is that the continuous introduction of new technologies is causing greater inequalities within countries and result in greater disparities among countries, as those people and societies with the resources and access to be able to utilize new technologies accrue great benefits,

while those without fall behind. To counteract this tendency, attention should be given to creating mechanisms for the transfer of technologies, to promoting research and development in labour-intensive technologies, to supporting efforts of developing countries to promote technological innovation and overall to increase the employment impact of new technologies. The special session might provide an appropriate forum for further discussion of this important issue.

45. The introduction of policies that simultaneously improve both efficiency and equity is quite feasible. An important example is improvements in human services. In few countries is there satiation of demand for services. Education, health, welfare and information services need to be extended or improved, pollution reduced, the environment better managed and the arts encouraged. As income rises, the proportion people want to spend on human services increases. Demand for education and training, for improvements in access to health services, and for care for the aged, the young and families in crisis rises, as does interest in travel and eating out, retailing and financial services, personal professional and technical services, and sports and culture.

46. The equitable availability of the first group of services can only be assured if they are principally supplied publicly. There are serious shortfalls in supplies of these public goods in all developing and transition countries and even in many developed countries. Countries might well want to aspire to international best practice in the provision of services for their own people, as well as in the production of goods and services for export, which certainly requires increased outlays, not downsizing as a result of restructuring.

47. Increasing public support for the non-profit community sector is another cost-effective means of increasing the availability of labour-intensive services and thus of employment. Part-time and voluntary work can be particularly important in the provision of services to groups with special needs. The provision of core support by government can enable some community services to be efficiently provided by combinations of part-time and volunteer workers.

48. Various types of employment experience and on-the-job training programmes have been found to be useful means of increasing the employability of the long-term unemployed in various countries. Among a great diversity of schemes are some that involve wage subsidies to employers; others are short-term training programmes and programmes which offer small capital grants or loans to potential small entrepreneurs.

49. The weakness of labour-market institutions has proved to be a severe handicap in dealing with the social consequences of economic crises and with the increased employment restructuring associated with greater integration into the global economy. It is therefore important to ensure freedom of association for workers, and to strengthen workers' and employers' organizations as well as institutions for collective bargaining and social dialogue. This will yield benefits in the form of greater social stability and the enhanced ability to mobilize broad-based cooperative effort in dealing with the problems of economic reform and the social consequences of economic crises. At the same time, it will also be important to strengthen the capacity of government agencies to design and implement active labour-market policies such as direct employment creation, retraining and redeployment assistance.

50. Informal and unregulated forms of employment are growing in developing, transitional and even industrialized countries. Furthermore, in the context of globalization, new trade and subcontracting relationships are emerging between the formal and informal sectors. Whereas the informal sector provides a valuable source of employment for both workers and entrepreneurs unable to find opportunities in the formal sector, it is also plagued by low productivity and poor working conditions. New initiatives to meet the challenge of the informal sector could focus on increasing productivity through access to credit, basic infrastructure and social services, on a regulatory environment which is conducive to improving the quality of work without stifling the informal sector's employment creating capacity and on organizing informal sector employers and workers to defend their own interests. Such initiatives could also involve local government, business and other civil society actors who are closest to the informal sector.

51. Innovative approaches to increasing employment were recommended at the International Expert Meeting on Innovative Employment Initiatives, hosted by the Austrian Government in February 1998 (see document A/53/350, annex). The report of the meeting contains a number of recommendations that the special session may wish to consider such as the reorganization of work, including reduction of working hours; the effectiveness of social pacts in some countries (discussed above); and employment subsidies to facilitate return to work for the long-term unemployed.

52. A particularly significant development was the adoption by the International Labour Conference at its eighty-sixth session on 18 June 1998 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up. This is a

significant step towards fulfilling commitment 3 (i) adopted in Copenhagen on "ensuring quality jobs" and safeguarding "the basic rights and interests of workers".

53. A comprehensive national employment strategy must also include explicit expression of the right to employment of the disabled and other disadvantaged groups such as indigenous people, migrants and ethnic minorities, and programmes for encouraging their inclusion in the workforce. The goals of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities are well addressed in the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.[8]

54. Strategies for reducing youth unemployment were discussed at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in Portugal, held in August 1998. The Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes[9] offers useful inputs into the discussion.

55. Some of the discussion during the International Year of Older Persons also provides useful material. Such issues as retirement ages, part-time work for older people, entrepreneurship among older persons and social security and pension arrangements are all important.

Topics for further initiatives

56. The Preparatory Committee may wish to consider the following topics for further initiatives:

(a) Mandating preparation of a global action programme for full employment in an integrating world;

(b) Design and introduction of policies which aim to increase the rate of economic growth in ways that will maximize the growth of employment;

(c) Refocusing macroeconomic policies so that social goals and priorities become central and are sought simultaneously with economic priorities;

(d) Strengthening procedures and institutions for social dialogue, including by encouraging growth of civil society organizations and guaranteeing freedom of association;

(e) Transfer of technology to promote technological innovation in all countries;

(f) Strengthening the capacity of government agencies to design and implement active labour-market policies;

(g) Increasing productivity and social protection in the informal and small business sectors by developing appropriate regulatory structures, organizational capacity and access to social services;

(h) Promoting an environment conducive to the employment of people with disabilities, strategies for reducing youth unemployment, and employment issues of interest to older persons.

IV. Social integration

57. The agreed conclusions on promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons, adopted by the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-sixth session,[10] together with the report of two expert workshops (E/CN.5/1998/4, annex; and E/CN.5/1998/5, annex), and the report of the Secretary-General on promoting social integration and participation of all people (E/CN.5/1998/2) provide substantial input into discussion on social integration for the special session. As at the Summit, the goal of a "society for all" was adopted.

58. One of the requirements for social integration is the generally held sense that society is fair. People need confidence that justice will generally prevail. This involves both the rule of law and fair judicial procedures as well as social justice. Inequity in all its forms — political, socio-economic and cultural — is one of the principal impediments to overcoming social exclusion. The actions of the private sector, non-government organizations and other groups within civil society are as crucial as those of government if efforts to overcome social exclusion and poverty and to strengthen social integration are to succeed. Whether setting an agenda for action, or implementing decisions already taken, Governments have a keen interest and an important stake in forging a partnership with other social actors.

59. A robust civil society is a prerequisite of participatory forms of government and a foundation for successful democratic development. Effective community organizations are also important in strengthening government accountability and transparency. A wide range of active non-government institutions within a democratic form of government provide the basis for a well-functioning society. At the same time, they help to maintain powerful underlying commitment to democratic development, political pluralism and the protection of individual liberties. While State action is indispensable in overcoming exclusion and fostering social integration, it is more successful when linked with an effective set of institutions in civil society.

60. Access to information has proved to be extremely important in establishing and maintaining a participatory culture at the national level. Although there are no ready-made schemes for promoting participation and social integration, the role of information is crucial in fostering policy dialogue and open political discourse. Better information-sharing can help Governments and all social actors to consider what is being done and what immediate priorities exist for the future. The efficacy of ongoing or proposed policy efforts in the social field can be better affirmed in a participatory way, with the effective involvement of the potential beneficiaries of proposed schemes. One of the challenges in this area is to make information that maximizes participation more readily available and user-friendly.

61. A free, open and professional media based on diversity of ownership and control is a crucial factor in effective participatory governance. A linchpin and safeguard of democratic development, a free mass communications media plays an indispensable role in ensuring diversity in society and equality of opportunity. In a democratic context, where the rule of law is reinforced by appropriate legal structures, a free media enables even smaller groups to define and represent themselves, providing at the same time an opportunity for open discussion, which is so important in peaceful resolution of actual or potential conflicts.

62. A growing concern in some countries has been the role of mass media in encouraging anti-social behaviour among vulnerable children and youth and in eroding the family influence in the socialization of children. An important and recent concern has been the impact of transnational informational technology and mass media on peoples' perceptions and expectations, in terms of their leading to or aggravating a conflict between expectations and realities, and between values and social roles, induced by the contrast between the cultures of rich countries and the pattern of opportunity in less well off societies.

63. In all countries, families are crucial in respect of the socialization of the young and the formation of relationships on which social cohesion depends. They are also one of the core providers of support for dependants, whether young, old or disabled. In many countries, they are the principal or only accessible providers. Even though five years have passed since the observance of the International Year of the Family, there is still much that can be done on their behalf, particularly in the areas of economic support and provision of social services. The special session may wish to reiterate support for action on behalf of families.

64. As fertility and mortality decline globally, the proportion of older persons in the population is rising in almost all countries. While the issue in industrialized countries is the sheer number of older persons, the concern in many developing countries is the unprecedented tempo of population ageing. Beyond demography, ageing has increasingly been recognized as a lifelong and society-wide phenomenon, one that calls for adjustment at both individual and societal levels. Individual adjustment to longevity is based on a recognition that late-life capabilities have their genesis in early life. Lifelong progression into the later years should be facilitated by promoting enabling environments provided by the family, the community and the society at large. National and international policies should be developed which facilitate the participation and integration of persons into society throughout the entire lifespan, and which provide the necessary support in periods of dependency, including in very old age. The special session might wish to consider these issues by comparing national experience and discussing the relevance of international norms.

65. The growth of national and international crime, increases in levels of violence, and continuing problems associated with the use of and trafficking in illicit drugs are other symptoms of social disintegration. A breakdown in national and international order which these problems represent can have high social and economic costs, expressed in heightened personal and community insecurity, and in the erosion of fair administrative, allocative and distributional structures. At its thirty-sixth session, in 1998, the Commission for Social Development considered that while the primary responsibility for crime prevention and criminal justice rests at the national level, violence, crime and illicit drugs activities are of such magnitude and also have such major transnational dimensions that they require international cooperation and coordination in respect of formulating and implementing effective responses. In this connection, the special session may wish to consider how it might best promote the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on the control of illicit drugs held in June 1998.

66. Further evidence of the danger of social disintegration is the rise in levels of conflict within many countries in recent years. While all societies experience conflicts of interest among their constituent members, many societies seem to have lost the ability to find equitable and peaceful resolutions to those conflicts. The effects of internal conflict are painfully real and represent a severe hindrance to socio-economic development in the countries in which they occur. The Copenhagen Programme of Action called for improving

mechanisms for resolving conflicts peacefully and reintegrating society following conflicts, including efforts towards reconciliation and confidence-building between the conflicting groups, training in non-violent conflict resolution at all levels of education, the reconstruction of social institutions that have been destroyed, the reintegration of displaced and disabled persons, and the re-establishment of the rule of law and respect for all human rights. The special session might give priority attention to efforts to promote and support the efforts of countries to achieve this essential goal.

67. To achieve the goal of social inclusion will require addressing the issue of children at risk, particularly in times of conflict and war, or as a result of exploitation in the labour force or the sex industry, or because of family violence or disintegration. In many countries, the problems which lead to large numbers of children who are runaways or otherwise living in the streets of large cities remain recalcitrant. The Copenhagen Programme of Action called for giving special attention to promoting and protecting the rights of the child, with particular attention to the rights of the girl child, by, *inter alia*, encouraging the ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights on the Child and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s adopted at the World Summit for Children. The special session may wish to review the status of implementation of these agreements and encourage their further widespread application.

Topics for further initiatives

68. The Preparatory Committee may wish to consider the following topics for further initiatives:

(a) Actions to encourage the flow of information which maximizes participation, and to make information more user-friendly;

(b) Actions to support families, particularly in the areas of economic support and provision of social services;

(c) Comparison of national experience in policies on ageing and discussion of the relevance of adopting international norms;

(d) Consideration of activities to support the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to drugs, held in June 1998;

(e) Mechanisms for resolving conflicts peacefully and reintegrating society following conflicts;

(f) Status of ratification and implementation of international agreements concerning children.

V. Equality and equity between women and men

69. Gender equality is an issue for societies as a whole. Given the comprehensiveness of the implications of the gender dimension, the most important contribution of the special session to gender equality may well be to ensure that the issue is considered in relation to each commitment outlined in the Copenhagen Declaration — to ensure, in other words, that gender is mainstreamed.

70. There is a growing recognition among policy makers that redressing gender inequalities requires substantial changes in approaches to the formulation of policy, including development projects and programmes, specifically through the identification and recognition of gender factors in policy and programme design as well as subsequently in implementation. As with all national goals, however, gender mainstreaming involves emphasizing outcomes as well as plans and intentions. It implies changes in institutions, particularly the educational systems in relation to the new needs and concerns of society. Universal access to education for girls remains an issue of crucial importance in all countries. One concern for the special session will be whether targets can be strengthened and additional resources allocated to this essential requirement of social development.

71. Despite some progress, there is still gender-related discrimination in many countries, particularly at all levels of decision-making. Furthermore, without gender-sensitive policies, it is hardly possible to achieve alleviation of poverty because poverty has significant gender dimensions, for the causes and experiences of poverty can be different for women and men. Without the proper acknowledgement of gender factors, issues relating to a caring society that is supportive of children, sick people and the elderly cannot be adequately discussed. In high-income countries, it is impossible to discuss these issues and paid and unpaid work without reference to gender. In developing countries, two important gender-related issues are rural development and microcredit.

72. Equitable social development requires the mainstreaming of gender considerations in all levels of social policy-making and in the planning of programmes and projects. This is true not least because it is a prerequisite for achieving a "society for all", one of the primary goals of the

Summit. Therefore, the special session might appropriately consider the extent to which gender considerations have been successfully mainstreamed to date, and might provide an occasion for the exchange of experience in this regard, while recognizing that the specific concerns of women will be taken up at the special session of the General Assembly on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in early June 2000, on the theme "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

Topics for further initiatives

73. The Preparatory Committee may wish to consider the following topic for further initiatives:

Means of strengthening gender mainstreaming and promoting gender equality nationally and internationally.

VI. Universal and equitable access to quality education and health services

74. The Commission for Social Development, at its thirty-seventh session, in February 1999, adopted agreed conclusions on social services for all which offer numerous suggestions for achieving the goals contained in this commitment. The special session may wish to consider these suggestions in detail. In summary, the Commission expressed the view that investment in social services will contribute to poverty eradication, peace, equity and equality, social progress and cohesion, economic productivity, productive employment and full participation of all people in society. Extending the coverage of education, health care and other social services to include all members of society, while at the same time improving their quality, are therefore vital. To do this will probably require additional and more targeted funding, as well as improvements in the planning, administration and delivery of existing services so that they become more efficient and effective.

75. In nearly all countries, substantial improvements in access, delivery, quality and financing of social services are still required to meet the targets endorsed by the Summit, in particular the target of achieving universal primary education in all countries before the year 2015. The Commission for Social Development recommended to the special session that it reinforce those commitments by considering national strategies and supportive international policies necessary for their achievement.

76. The inadequacy of health care in many countries is clear, and in fact there has been deterioration in the provision of health care in many countries during the last couple of decades. The World Health Organization (WHO) is now addressing this subject, and will make proposals to the Committee on this issue at its first session.

77. Access to both education and health services are at the heart of the 20/20 initiative. Representatives of some 50 countries and a dozen United Nations funds, programmes and organizations, attending a meeting at Hanoi in October 1998 to review progress made since the Oslo meeting on the initiative in 1996, adopted the Hanoi Consensus on the 20/20 Initiative: Achieving Universal Access to Basic Social Services (A/53/684, annex), which begins by reiterating that the goal of universal access to basic social services is based on ethical, legal and economic grounds (para. 4), and goes on to state that the initiative suggests an indicative allocation of 20 per cent of national budgets in developing countries and 20 per cent of official development assistance to basic social services in order to close the gap between current spending and the minimum level required to achieve universal access (para. 6).

78. The gap between scientific possibilities and availability of funds which exists in the area of health research, particularly research on the diseases which afflict many people in developing countries who are unable to pay for development or production of modern effective drugs, makes it imperative for the State and other partners to forge more effective cooperation and partnerships with the private sector. There is a need to explore opportunities to increase the number of sponsors who may be willing to fund broader areas of health research. Research partnerships and other forms of joint ventures with major pharmaceutical companies can help to overcome an apparent market failure in this field, compensating for insignificant commercial prospects in this area and bringing closer the targets set at Copenhagen. The special session may wish to endorse partnership models as well as to consider new initiatives in this regard.

Topics for further initiatives

79. The Preparatory Committee may wish to consider the following topics for further initiatives:

(a) Mandating preparation of a new global plan of action to achieve access to education for all by 2015;

(b) Mandating preparation of a global plan of action to achieve access to basic health services for all by 2015;

(c) Further review and consideration of the impact effectiveness of the 20/20 initiative and measures for its lementation;

(d) Means for improving partnerships between the ic and private sectors in the area of health research so increase incentives for private research.

I. Accelerating the development of Africa and the least developed countries

Many of the studies already mentioned and those ussed below are of vital importance to Africa and to least loped countries, as regards, *inter alia*, education, health, loyment, debt, rural development and official lopment assistance (ODA). Many initiatives are under . The subregional conferences on follow-up to the mit organized by the Economic Commission for Africa A) are contributing to identifying additional specifically sed initiatives. At the conference on Summit follow-up stern and southern Africa organized by ECA, speakers hasized many issues, *inter alia*, the importance of eving the economic growth rates sought in the United ons Special Initiative for Africa, to enable expansion of loyment and reduction of poverty; the value of roeconomic stability; the centrality of universal, high-ity education and health services; the priority given to ıcing corruption; and the importance of developing eful means to resolve conflicts.

The majority of African countries continue to rely on few commodities for export earnings. This situation, bined with the fact that prices for most of those modities are low and declining, results in inadequate spects for growth. Diversification of commodity luction and exports is an effective way of improving food rity, raising employment and incomes and also lessening ca's vulnerability to changes in the external ronment. This issue has been the subject of discussion e General Assembly at its forty-eighth, forty-ninth and eth sessions. In a report on the subject, the Secretary-eral recommended the establishment of a diversification ity to finance diversification projects and programmes. Common Fund for Commodities has taken some action little progress has been made on this issue. The special ion can be the forum to remobilize support for the ity and to spur action on this important aspect of African elopment.

82. Inadequate access to credit and high interest rates do not foster entrepreneurship and are deterrents to the establishment of dynamic small and medium-sized enterprises, the basis of a revitalized domestic private sector in Africa. There are particular institutional reasons for discussing them in relation to Africa. Background work is required on how the special session could make a contribution to dealing with this crucial subject.

83. The situation in Africa regarding human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) has become catastrophic. Today, more than 20 million Africans are infected with HIV. An estimated four million new infections occurred in Africa in 1998 and over two million people died of AIDS, including nearly half a million children. Hard-won gains in life expectancy and child survival rates are being wiped out and AIDS-related suffering is enormous for individuals, families and societies. Education and health systems are severely strained by the loss of trained personnel and incur higher costs because of the epidemic.

84. In the light of this crisis, the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations (CCO) endorsed a Partnership against HIV/AIDS in Africa in April 1998. This partnership will be the primary vehicle for intensifying the response to the crisis in Africa. The goal of the partnership, which consists of Governments, UNAIDS co-sponsoring agencies, bilateral organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, is to mobilize Governments and organizations of civil society to redirect and expand national and international political, programme and financial commitments and action to address the epidemic and its impact on life and the potential for socio-economic development in Africa. Experience to date points to a number of "key elements" which successful national AIDS programmes and projects seem to have in common. The partnership will support these elements and exchange experience on a large scale so that successful responses to the epidemic can be multiplied rapidly across all African countries. The members of the partnership will work to create a policy and social environment conducive to success action against the epidemic. The "core" programmatic actions which will be supported include youth education and mobilization, voluntary counselling and testing, interventions to prevent mother-to-child transmission, strengthened action to prevent and treat sexually transmitted diseases, distribution of condoms, improved community standards of care, treatment of common opportunistic infections, and special services for families with orphans.

The special session might wish to support and promote these activities.

Topics for further initiatives

85. The Preparatory Committee may wish to consider the following topics for further initiatives:

(a) Support for the commodities diversification facility;

(b) Further support for appropriate efforts to reduce substantially the debts of the poorest and heavily indebted low-income countries in Africa (see also sect. IX below);

(c) Promoting access to credit, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (see section on employment);

(d) Strengthening support for activities to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS and counteract its negative impact on African societies.

VIII. Ensuring that structural adjustment programmes include social development goals

86. The debate about the most appropriate policies to follow when countries face current-account deficits, structural imbalances and financial crises of different origins, while seeking to maintain or create conditions conducive to economic and employment growth without inflation, has continued since the Summit. A vigorous dialogue among different players with different viewpoints is under way.

87. In the period since the Summit, many countries, and indeed the international system as a whole, have had to face severe disruptions, in some cases on an unprecedented scale. It has become clear that there are wide differences among Governments and professionals about the most appropriate means for handling the financial crises. For example, it is essential to improve the speed of response to crises. A crucial issue for discussion is how to ensure that social policies are incorporated in the initial macroeconomic strategy for dealing with crises (see sect. I above).

88. Among the questions many countries have indicated that they intended raising in the preparations for, and at the special session itself are:

- What changes have been made to structural adjustment programmes since the Summit to implement the Summit commitment to ensuring that social development goals are included?
- To what extent has International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank practice in countries, as compared with institutional policy, actually changed? Are further recommendations required?

89. The importance of increasing the transparency and accountability of the Bretton Woods institutions and of the World Trade Organization were suggested as important issues for discussion by speakers during the thirty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development. As the Summit called for the General Assembly to give consideration to promoting and strengthening the coordination of United Nations system activities, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization at the global, regional and national levels in the area of economic and social development programmes, including through reports to and meetings in coordination with the Economic and Social Council, the special session might wish to consider ways and means to strengthen such coordination, particularly with reference to the ongoing evaluation of the social impact of structural adjustment programmes.

Topics for further initiatives

90. The Preparatory Committee may wish to consider the following topic for further initiatives:

Ways and means to strengthen coordination between the Economic and Social Council, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, with regard to the ongoing evaluation of the social impact of structural adjustment programmes.

IX. Increasing resources allocated to social development

91. Just as preparation for the special session on sustainable development led inevitably to the issue of finance for sustainable policies, the issue of resources has become even more important in the context of social development. Human services, such as basic education and health care, technical and continuing education, information and extension services, care for the young, old and disabled and programmes to reduce marginalization of migrant, indigenous and other disadvantaged groups, are principally provided through public outlays in most countries. In all countries, the major part of some social services has to be provided through the public sector in order to ensure equitable accessibility. Therefore, ensuring adequate sources of revenue is essential.

92. The total amount of revenue available to pay for all public goods is a political choice, though a heavily constrained one, as is the proportion of it that is allocated to social services. There is a widespread tendency at present to believe that taxes must be cut under pressure of immutable global forces, an aspect of which is tax competition between countries. An issue for possible discussion is whether this is correct or is a misleading oversimplification. For example, in advanced economies, average proportional revenue collections have not fallen at all so far; in fact, the average proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries collected as revenue continued to edge up during the 1990s. It may well have plateaued by now, but it has only fallen in a few countries and those countries in which it has risen have offset this phenomenon. Data on developing countries vary more widely and are more difficult to interpret. The special session may wish to consider the dimensions of tax policy that are necessary to ensure that sufficient revenue is generated to pay for public services including social services. The issue is about ensuring sufficient public resources for public purposes.

93. Increases in revenue collections may well be feasible in many countries. The most notable exceptions are those in which the ratio of revenue to GDP is already high. Increased collections can commonly be achieved simply by improving the efficiency of tax administrations.

94. In a globalizing world, tax interactions among countries have to be kept under constant review. No forum currently exists to perform this function, and consideration might be given to establishing one. The need is likely to grow for some form of international cooperation and coordination to reduce the pressure on national revenue collection from unrestrained international tax competition.

95. Within many national budgets, there may well be scope for reconsidering the allocation of resources, for example by reducing military outlays in order to release funds for higher priority human services. Such reallocation has the twin benefits of improving services and of increasing labour-intensive employment.

96. Development cooperation assistance continues to be an issue of crucial importance to many countries with low average incomes or that experience national disasters. One possible intermediate target, which the special session could consider, would be agreeing to reverse the current decline; that is to say, the special session could agree to urge each donor country that has not reached the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for ODA, to decide to increase the proportion of its GNP allocated to aid for each of the next five years. At least five countries have started to do this or have announced plans to do so — Italy, Ireland, Germany, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom — in addition to those that are already providing more than 0.7 per cent, namely, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

97. Recently, an international consensus seems to have coalesced around the need for substantial reduction in the debts of the poorest and heavily indebted low-income countries. Yet action has been slow, and the international debts of these countries remain a major constraint on poverty reduction strategies and overall development initiatives. It would be appropriate for the special session to consider the issue and provide further political support to appropriate efforts.

98. Another issue is that of private finance for development. In the aftermath of the international financial crisis, private financial flows to developing countries have declined and the picture for the future is less clear. The Committee could consider including issues relating to the attraction and management of direct foreign investment in the agenda of the special session, or determine whether such issues should more appropriately be left to a United Nations conference on finance for development.

Topics for further initiatives

99. The Preparatory Committee may wish to consider the following topics for further initiatives:

(a) Preparation of guidelines for policies aiming to collect sufficient revenue to pay for national social services, social protection and other social policies in the context of globalization;

(b) Identification of effective forms of international cooperation and coordination of taxation policy between countries so as to contain tax competition;

(c) Agreeing on further initiatives to substantially reduce the debts of the heavily indebted low-income countries;

(d) Reversing the current decline in ODA and efforts to reach the agreed international targets for such assistance;

(e) Ways and means to attract and manage direct foreign investment.

X. Implementation and institutional reform

100. One of the benefits of preparation for the special session will be the opportunity it offers for sharing experience with respect to national mechanisms used for implementing and monitoring Summit commitments. Some countries have included goals and policies based on those adopted at the Summit in national strategies; others have introduced new approaches to policy development, have renewed or maintained existing institutions or have sought additional external support. Some have done very little.

101. A tool that some countries have found useful is social impact assessment. The special session might wish to consider a clear commitment to the use of social impact assessments as a technique for evaluating national policy and programme initiatives and major projects. The establishment of national units for planning and evaluation of the effectiveness of policies and the strengthening of such units within international development cooperation agencies could be considered. This could be extended to introduction of international social auditing of the type undertaken in relation to economies by IMF and OECD.

102. All countries would benefit from stronger and more effective international commitment to implementation. Clarifying which strategic goals are to be sought in the field of social and economic development as well as better ways of achieving them is one of the main objectives of the United Nations system. The mandates as well as the policies and established practices of the specialized agencies and funds differ, making collaboration even more imperative. Policy implementation in many socio-economic areas requires not only the concerted efforts of international agencies but also cooperation beyond agency boundaries to ensure effectiveness.

103. One of the issues most frequently mentioned by delegates at the organizational session for consideration by the special session was standardizing social development indicators. Preparatory work is well advanced and the results were scheduled to be discussed at a meeting of the Economic and Social Council, which was to be held before the first session of the Committee. On the basis of the outcome of those discussions, the special session would be an appropriate occasion for international affirmation of this work.

104. With increasing international integration, strengthening international institutional arrangements for the development of social and economic strategy and policy-making is imperative. The United Nations, its funds and programmes, the specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions are all undergoing a process of reform and reorientation. Strengthening the Economic and Social Council system is one aspect of this, but more is required. With growing global integration more public goods can only be provided efficiently if they are organized on a cooperative international basis.

Topics for further initiatives

105. The Preparatory Committee may wish to consider the following topics for further initiatives:

(a) Measures designed to ensure that the objectives and policy approaches of the Summit are reflected effectively in the mandates, programmes and coordination arrangements of international institutions;

(b) Deciding on standardized development indicators;

(c) Additional public goods which should be organized and provided internationally.

XI. Conclusion

106. The present report discusses issues of current international concern, and suggests areas that could be addressed in the context of the special session. The Committee will provide the principal focused opportunity for Governments to comment on and propose additional issues and to suggest priorities. It is important to emphasize that preparation for the special session is a process including both Preparatory Committee meetings and sessions of the Commission for Social Development. This gives considerable opportunity for additional initiatives to be discussed and agreed before the special session. At the present stage, the crucial need is for identifying priorities and mandating the elaboration of a few specific initiatives.

107. Given the broad range of the issues discussed in the present report it would be valuable if a central theme which provides coherence to the debate is identified. For example, one central theme which embodies the issues discussed in the present report is "Putting social development at the centre of national and global political agendas".

108. Whether this or another theme is selected by the special session to facilitate the discussions and convey its main message, it may be feasible to narrow the range of issues on which the special session may wish to focus. The following list is an attempt at that (each of these is an issue of acute contemporary importance, and concrete action is

possible in relation to each; they are listed in the order in which they appear earlier in the present report, which reflects the sequence of the Commitments made at the Summit and not the order of their importance):

- Preparation of principles of socio-economic policy for responding to financial crises;
- Preparation of guidelines on the social responsibilities of business;
- Adoption of a global target for poverty eradication of halving the number of people living in absolute poverty by the year 2015;
- Establishment, strengthening and improvement of the management of national social protection systems;
- Mandating preparation of a global action programme for full employment in an integrating world;
- Refocusing macroeconomic policies so that social goals and priorities become central and are sought simultaneously with economic priorities;
- Strengthening procedures and institutions for social dialogue, including by encouraging growth of civil society organizations and guaranteeing freedom of association;
- Means of strengthening gender mainstreaming and promoting gender equality nationally and internationally;
- Mandating preparation of a new global plan of action to achieve access to education for all by 2015;
- Mandating preparation of a global plan of action to achieve access to basic health services for all by 2015;
- Strengthening support for activities to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS;
- Preparation of guidelines for policies aiming to collect sufficient revenue to pay for national social services, social protection and other social policies in the context of globalization.

109. In addition, the special session could also provide a political impetus on the following cross-cutting issues, which are also the subject of discussion in other forums:

- Identification of effective forms of international cooperation and coordination of taxation policy between countries so as to contain tax competition;
- Agreeing on further initiatives to substantially reduce the debts of the heavily indebted low-income countries;
- Reversing the current decline in ODA and efforts to reach the agreed international targets for such assistance;
- Deciding on standardized development indicators.

Notes

[1] See *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I, sect. C.

[2] Ibid., annex II.

[3] Ibid., annex I.

[4] General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

[5] General Assembly resolution 41/128 of 4 December 1986, annex.

[6] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 6* (E/1997/26), chap. I, sect. D., resolution 35/2, agreed conclusions on productive employment and sustainable livelihoods, para. 3.

[7] Ibid.

[8] General Assembly resolution 48/96 of 20 December 1993, annex.

[9] A/53/378, annex I.

[10] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 6* (E/1998/26), chap. I, sect. B, resolution 36/1.